
Introduced by Senator Wiggins

April 21, 2009

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 37—Relative to the Silverado Trail.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 37, as introduced, Wiggins. The Silverado Trail.

This measure would designate a specified portion of State Highway Route 29 in Napa County as the Silverado Trail. The measure would also request the Department of Transportation to determine the cost of appropriate signs showing this special designation and, upon receiving donations from nonstate sources covering that cost, to erect those signs.

Fiscal committee: yes.

- 1 WHEREAS, In the 1850s, volunteers built the Old Bull Trail
2 from what is today the City of Calistoga over Mount St. Helena
3 in Napa County to what is today Middletown in Lake County; and
4 WHEREAS, Due to grades exceeding 35 percent along the Old
5 Bull Trail, which prevented wagon travel, the Legislature, in 1866,
6 authorized John Lawley to construct a private toll road to replace
7 most of the Old Bull Trail starting approximately 1.5 miles north
8 of the City of Calistoga; and
9 WHEREAS, The toll road over Mount St. Helena was completed
10 in 1868 with grades of just 12 percent. This toll road is still in use
11 today as a public road and is known both as the “Old Toll Road”
12 and as “Lawley Road”; and
13 WHEREAS, In 1872, John Lawley, along with William
14 Montgomery and William Patterson, founded the Monitor Ledge
15 Mine on Mount St. Helena just off the Old Toll Road and later

1 renamed that mine and the surrounding community “Silverado”;
2 and

3 WHEREAS, During one point in its short three-year life, the
4 mining town of Silverado housed over 1,000 people. Many more
5 people came and went during that time in search of fortunes, every
6 one of whom traveled the toll road and the 1.5 mile remnant of the
7 Old Bull Trail that connected that toll road to Calistoga and to the
8 rest of the Napa Valley; and

9 WHEREAS, In the summer of 1880, a young author, running
10 low on cash, and his new bride left their honeymoon suite in the
11 resort town of Calistoga to become squatters in the mining town
12 of Silverado, which had been abandoned five years earlier; and

13 WHEREAS, One hundred twenty-five years ago, Robert Louis
14 Stevenson’s *The Silverado Squatters*, a travelogue detailing the
15 young author’s trip to Napa Valley, was published for the first
16 time; and

17 WHEREAS, In *The Silverado Squatters*, the best-selling author
18 of *Treasure Island* and *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*
19 introduced the world to the beauty of the Napa Valley and the
20 quality of its wine, famously describing it as “bottled poetry”; and

21 WHEREAS, In a chapter of *The Silverado Squatters* entitled
22 “Starry Drive,” Robert Louis Stevenson recounted the brilliant
23 night sky above the 1.5 mile remnant of the Old Bull Trail as he
24 rambled back to his honeymoon perch one summer evening. Few
25 roads have ever been described so vividly; and

26 WHEREAS, In 1921, a local farm bureau successfully petitioned
27 the County of Napa to name a series of rough roads and trails
28 running along the eastern spine of the Napa Valley, known
29 collectively as the “Old Back Road,” the Silverado Trail after the
30 mining town Robert Louis Stevenson made famous; and

31 WHEREAS, Although that collection of roads running along
32 Napa Valley’s eastern spine ended at Tubbs Lane just north of the
33 Old Toll Road, the County of Napa ended the newly named
34 Silverado Trail 1.5 miles short of the Old Toll Road because the
35 county was making arrangements to turn that 1.5 mile stretch of
36 road over to the state to incorporate it into a new modern highway
37 to be built by Lake County; and

38 WHEREAS, As a result of Napa County’s decision to
39 incorporate this stretch of historic road into a modern highway,
40 the history of this pioneer pathway, Robert Louis Stevenson’s

1 “Starry Drive” and the last leg of the trail to Silverado, has been
2 lost until now; and

3 WHEREAS, That stretch of road predates John Lawley’s Old
4 Toll Road, was originally built by California pioneers in the 1850s,
5 shortly after California’s statehood, as part of the Old Bull Trail,
6 and is now memorialized by a historical marker in Middletown,
7 Lake County; and

8 WHEREAS, That stretch of road also predates the City of
9 Calistoga, which was formed in 1867, and Lake County, which
10 was carved out of Napa County in 1861; now, therefore, be it

11 *Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly*
12 *thereof concurring*, That the forgotten last leg of the trail to
13 Silverado, the portion of State Highway Route 29 in Napa County
14 from post mile 37.9 to post mile 39.5, is recognized for its historical
15 importance in the development of California and particularly of
16 Napa and Lake Counties; and be it further

17 *Resolved*, That the portion of State Highway Route 29 from post
18 mile 37.9 to post mile 39.5 in Napa County is designated as the
19 Silverado Trail; and be it further

20 *Resolved*, That the Department of Transportation is requested
21 to determine the cost of appropriate signs consistent with the
22 signing requirements for the state highway system showing this
23 special designation and, upon receiving donations from nonstate
24 sources covering that cost, to erect those signs; and be it further

25 *Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of
26 this resolution to the Department of Transportation and the author
27 for appropriate distribution.